about Rs. 307 lakhs. Government is providing non-plan assistance to IDPL for payment of salaries.

Financial assistance for fertiliser transportation

3662. SHRIMATI CHANDRESH KUMARI: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether requests have been received from Himachal Pradesh for special financial assistance on fertiliser transportation in the State on the pattern of Jammu and Kashmir and North-Eastern States;

(b) whether these requests also include the Union Government to meet the extra cost of transportation of de-controlled fertilisers in Himachal Pradesh; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action taken, with latest position?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (c) Yes, Madam. In pursuance of the request of Himachal Pradesh State Government, the Government of India has decided to extend the scheme for providing additional freight support on transportation of decontrolled phosphatic and potassic fertilisers to Himachal Pradesh. The quantum of freight support is being decided in consultation with the State Government. In respect of urea, the freight subsidy is being provided to the State of Himachal Pradesh like others under the equated freight scheme. There is no decision to change it.

Development and use of Bio-Fertilizers in Tripura

3663. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to sanction Rs. 18.50 lacs from National Project and Technology Mission on Development and use of bio-fertilizers for strengthening bio-fertilizer production unit in Tripura, as submitted by Government of Tripura;

(b) if so, by when it would be sanctioned; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (c) The Government of Tripura had submitted a project proposal of Rs. 18.5 lakh for strengthening of the

existing bio-fertilizer production unit in 1997-98. While considering the proposal, it was found that the existing unit had received grants of Rs. 21 lakh from North-East Council for its establishment. The State Government was requested to inform about the utilisation of these grants in the 7th plan and the capacity established from this grant. The requisite information has not been submitted consequent to which the subsequent proposal has not been processed.

Transportation charges to retailers of levy sugar

3664. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are allowing transportation charges to retailers of State for procuring levy sugar for central pool; and

(b) if so, at what rate?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) and (b) Government allows transportation charges to the retailers of PDS Sugar at rates prescribed in the guidelines for distribution of levy sugar in the Public Distribution System. As per present guidelines for fixing margins for wholesalers/retailers effective from 1.4.1996, transportation charges for retailers of each State is fixed on the basis of audited figures of expenditure, duly approved by the State Government concerned, incurred for previous years.

Rice specifications

3665. SHRI SUKHDEV SINGH LIBRA:
SHRI LAJPAT RAI:
SARDAR GURCHARAN SINGH TOHRA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria laid down for fixation of rice specifications every year for acceptance of rice in central pool;

(b) whether Punjab Government has suggested relaxation in fixation of rice specification for kharif 1999-2000 marketing season; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?